

Application For Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Post-Secondary Tuition Assistance Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Funds are distributed on an academic year basis – Fall through August of each year. Applications for this program are not available before January 1st and are due no later than June 1st of each year for the next academic year (e.g., The deadline for Academic Year July 1, 2010 – June 30, 2011 is June 1, 2010).

Directions for Completing

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. It is my understanding that, as a youth who was involved with DCYF, I am entitled to financial aid from DCYF for college. Is that true?**

The DCYF Post-Secondary Tuition Assistance Program is funded through two separate sources, both with somewhat different rules for eligibility. These are not true entitlement programs. DCYF receives a set amount of money each year from each funding source and gives that money out based on youth who apply and meet eligibility criteria. **Funding is also on a first-come, first-served basis meaning that youth who apply earliest are more likely to receive funding.** It is important to apply no later than the annual deadline of June 1st because, once we've committed our funds for the year, we can't get anymore to give out.

- 2. What are the two separate funding streams that make up the DCYF Post-Secondary Tuition Assistance Program?**

- a. DCFY State Higher Education Opportunity Grant Program:** This program was created by RI Law (see <http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE42/42-72.8/INDEX.HTM> for the law) and funded by the RI General Assembly. DCYF receives \$200,000 each year to provide financial aid to youth who meet the criteria for DCYF involvement and who are full-time students at the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College or the University of Rhode Island. Funds from this program cannot be used after you turn age 21, unless you are full-time student at one of these schools on your 21st birthday. If you are, then you may continue to receive money from this program until the end of that academic year.
- b. Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program:** This program was created by Federal Law (see <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/programs/etv.html> for more information) and can be used for students attending a school which meets the federal Higher Education Act's definition of "Institution of Higher Education". While the amount DCYF receives for this varies from year to year, it generally is about \$225,000 per year. Youth do not need to be attending full time and each youth identified as eligible can get no more than \$5,000 per academic year (which we define as the Fall Semester through the Summer Sessions of each year – e.g., Fall 2008 through Summer 2009). **Eligibility for ETV funds ends at age 21 unless you are currently participating in the program when you turn 21 – if you are, then you can remain eligible until you turn age 23 as long as you stay in school and are considered by the school to be in good academic standing.**

- 3. I was told I only have to fill out this DCYF application one time and it covers me for the whole time I'm in school. Is that right?**

No. You must complete the DCYF Post-Secondary Tuition Assistance Program Application for each year you are attending school **or if you change schools.** If you fail to do so, we cannot consider you for funding for that year.

4. If I get financial aid from DCYF, can I use it for any expenses I want?

No. DCYF must use the “Cost of Attendance” as determined by the school you are attending. How a school determines what is included in “Cost of Attendance” can vary a little from school to school but generally includes things like tuition, room and board, and student fees. A helpful tool in looking at your school’s cost of attendance is the College Navigator website (<http://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/>). The information is sometimes a year behind but can at least show you what your school includes in the cost of attendance and help give you an idea of what your total cost for a semester/year might be for that school.

5. I heard that DCYF won’t make me take out loans for school and will cover any cost not covered by other grant programs. Is that true?

No. In fact, in 2009-10 DCYF was able to provide no more than \$5,000 to each student participating in the program because of the rising costs of attendance, the increased numbers of applicants and the level funding of our program.

DCYF uses the following formula to determine a student’s unmet financial need: **Cost of Attendance (as determined by the school) – Private, Federal & State Grants (including Work/Study) – Scholarships – Federal & State Loans = Unmet Student Need.**

However, because we have so many more youth taking advantage of the DCYF Post-Secondary Tuition Assistance Program, we cannot guarantee this for the future and we anticipate that students, regardless of the school they are attending, will need to take out loans.

It is important to remember that students attending CCRI, RIC or URI have two potential DCYF funding sources from which to get help– the DCYF State Higher Education Opportunity Grant Program and the Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) Program. **If you are attending any other school, you can be considered only for the Chafee ETV Program and can get only a maximum of \$5,000 per academic year.**

6. How does DCYF decide if I am eligible for the DCYF Higher Education Opportunity Grant Program? Can I use funds from the DCYF Higher Education Opportunity Grant to pay for the cost of attendance at any school in the country?

This grant program is limited to youth attending CCRI, RIC or URI who meet the following criteria:

- a. You are in DCYF care at the time of your initial application and were in foster care (defined as any out of home care except the RI Training School) for at least the two years prior to the application. If you’ve already turned 18 before your initial application, you must have been in foster care from your 16th birthday to your 18th birthday. If you were adopted while in DCYF foster care, even if you were adopted at age 17, you are not eligible for these funds; **and**
- b. You graduated from high school or received the equivalent of a high school diploma not more than one year before the date of your initial application or must be expected to graduate at the end of the semester in which the application is made; **and**
- c. You are attending one of the following Rhode Island schools on a full-time basis: the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College or the University of Rhode Island; **and**
- d. Your school must consider you to be in **good academic standing** for you to keep getting these funds; **and**
- e. This funding ends when you reach age 21 unless you are participating in this program at age 21 and are still enrolled in one of these three schools on your 21st birthday, DCYF can continue your funding for the rest of the academic year after you turn 21.

7. How does DCYF decide if I am eligible for the ETV Program? Can I use the Chafee Educational

and Training Voucher Grant to pay for the cost of attendance at any school in the country?

Youth eligibility criteria are:

- a. You must have been in foster care (defined as any out of home care excluding the RI Training School) for at least one day on or after your 16th birthday and the Department must have identified you as likely to remain in foster care until age 18 (or you have already aged out of foster care at age 18). If you were adopted from foster care or placed in a relative guardianship placement after your 16th birthday, you can be considered for the ETV Program;
- b. You must not have reached your 21st birthday when you initially apply. If you are attending school and participating in the ETV program on your 21st birthday, (this includes if you turn 21 during the summer break as long as the school continues to view you as a student), you can remain eligible until you turn 23 as long as you stay enrolled in a post secondary education or training program and are making satisfactory progress toward completion of that program;
- c. You must be attending a school which meets the definition of an Institution of Higher Education according to Sections 101 and 102 of the federal Higher Education Act. For a full definition, see <http://www.nrcys.ou.edu/yd/programs/pdfs/hea1965.pdf>. A brief summary of the definition of an Institution of Higher Education is as follows:
 - i. Awards a bachelor's degree or not less than a 2 year program that provides credit towards a degree or,
 - ii. Provides not less than 1 year of training towards gainful employment or,
 - iii. Is a vocational program that provides training for gainful employment and has been in existence for at least two years.
 - iv. In addition, the school must meet all three of the following criteria:
 1. Admits as regular students only persons with a high school diploma or equivalent; or admits as regular students persons who are beyond the age of compulsory school attendance
 2. Public, Private, or Non-Profit
 3. Accredited or pre accredited and is authorized to operate in that state
- d. Please note that a you can be a part time student and be eligible to receive ETV funding but the amount of that funds we can give you is still based on the your unmet need as defined by the school.

8. Does DCYF send the financial aid check to me directly?

- a. No. Awards are issued directly to the student's school. After the school deducts any costs which they pay directly, they will usually give the student a check for the remaining amount. As with most post secondary financial aid programs, the student must use this money to pay for items related to the cost of attendance such as off-campus meals if the student lives off campus and is not part of the school's meal plan, books/supplies, off-campus rent, transportation to and from school, etc. These funds cannot be used to purchase durable assets (e.g., a car, a laptop) unless that is identified by your school as part of the Cost of Attendance and/or you receive separate approval from DCYF.

9. What happens if I drop out of college in the middle of a year/semester - do I have to pay DCYF back?

- a. You will need to notify us that you have withdrawn and the date of your withdrawal. We will work with your school to determine whether or not any refunds are due to us. If you were given a check from the school to cover expenses not directly covered by your school, you may have to return funds to the school and/or DCYF. **You will need to discuss your situation with your school's financial aid office to determine what funds, if any, you need to pay back.**

- b. For example, if you live off-campus, you may get a check from the school which is intended to cover your rent while attending that school. If you withdraw before the end of the semester, you cannot use these funds for rent for the remaining time in that semester as you are no longer a student.

10. What happens if I don't get good grades in one semester – can I still get financial aid from DCYF for the next semester?

- a. Both the DCYF Higher Education Opportunity Grant Program and the federal ETV Program require the student to be in good academic standing. We rely on your school to make this determination for us. If you are informed by the school that you are not in good academic standing, you need to notify us immediately. We will look at your situation and try to work with you to help you get back on track. We want you to succeed so we may not stop your funding immediately as long as you are working toward improvement.